DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 135 800 TM 005 681

AUTHOR Hogan, Thomas P.
TITLE Student Evaluation of Courses in Terms of Personal Development.
PUB DATE [Apr 76]
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (60th, San Francisco, California, April 19-23, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cognitive Development; *College Students; *Course Evaluation; Factor Analysis; Goal Orientation; *Higher Education; *Individual Development; Questionnaires; Rating Scales; Student Teacher Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Course Comments Questionnaire; *Personalized Course Analysis

ABSTRACT

Most instruments for student evaluation of college instruction focus on the course and the instructor without considering the student's perception of the impact of the course on him or her. The Course Comments Questionnaire (CCQ) and the Personalized Course Analysis (PCA) were developed at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay to overcome this difficulty. By measuring the students' personal goals and the effectiveness of the course in moving toward these goals another dimension is added to the assessment of both instructional and institutional effectiveness. The CCQ and PCA are also applicable to virtually any kind of higher education experience. This report describes the two instruments and presents supporting data including (1) the results of a factor analysis which shows self-development as a different dimension from those in the course-centered evaluation instruments; (2) the relationships between student goals; and (3) the integration of student self-development data with institutional assessment. (Author/MV)

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STUDENT EVALUATION OF COURSES IN TERMS OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT[a]

by Thomas P. Hogan

To observe that post-secondary education is now being overrun with techniques for student evaluation of courses, via questionnaires, checklists and sundry other devices, is, by now, trite. It seems like every campus has its own special form and many have several forms. One might hope that from these efforts would spring a good deal of variety. This, however, seems clearly not to be the case. If one were to line up side by side the five or six most frequently cited instruments, meaningful differences between the instruments would be hard to detect.

Probably the most characteristic feature of all these instruments is that they all focus attention on the course -- what is going on -- and the instructor -- what is he or she doing. The central focus of the educational enterprise -- the student -- is lost sight of. From some perspectives, focusing attention on the course and instructor may be legitimate. On the other hand, focusing attention on the student would also seem to be a legitimate perspective for approaching the question of student evaluation of courses. The basic question becomes: What has been the impact of the course on the student, in the student's own judgment? The purpose of this paper is to explore this approach to student evaluation of courses by examining some concrete attempts to use this approach.

TWO INSTRUMENTS

We describe here two instruments developed at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay within the past four years which focus on aspects of student develop-

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a Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California, April, 1976. SESSION 8.08

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ment. The first of these instruments is known as the Course Comments Questionnaire (CCQ). The CCQ consists of 35 Likert-type items, yielding scores on seven different factors. The factors, as described in the Instructor's Manual (Hogan, B73b), and their associated items are displayed in Table 1.

These factors are an outgrowth of factor analytic work originally reported by Hartley and Hogan (1972). Other work using this instrument but not directly relevant to the present discussion may be found in Hogan (1973a) and Kulik & Kulik (1974).

The first four factors in the CCQ correspond closely to those identified in many other factor analytic studies which have employed traditional course/instructor-oriented questionnaires. These factors deal with instructor-student relationships, organization, the difficulty level of the course, and an overall judgment about both the course and instructor.

The last three factors represent the unique contribution of the CCQ in the area of student evaluation. These factors are, as simple inspection of the items in Table 1 makes evident, learner-oriented. The first of these factors deals with what we have called "general cognitive development," the development of cognitive abilities such as reasoning and working creatively without specific reference to the field being studied in the course. (Item 22, although turning up on this factor, is not consistent with the interpretation of the factor, for no readily apparent reason.)

The second learner-oriented factor has been labeled "specific cognitive development." It deals with students' self-perceived progress in knowledge, skills, etc. directly related to course content.

The third learner-oriented factor deals with the self-perceived development of interests, appreciations, concerns, and personal applications.

As suggested by the factor analytic origin of the CCQ scales, the learner-oriented items tap dimensions of student reactions to courses other than such traditional dimensions as course organization and instructor responsiveness.

Subsequent factor analyses which we have conducted with the CCQ items have confirmed the separateness of learner-oriented and course/instructor-oriented dimensions although subdivisions within these broad areas have not always duplicated those originally identified. The CCQ presently includes three such learner-oriented dimensions but it seems unlikely that these three exhaust the possibilities in this area. Hopefully, additional research will uncover additional learner-oriented dimensions which will further enrich our perspectives on student reactions.

A second instrument which we have developed extends the learner-orientation even farther than that represented in the CCQ. This instrument, known as the Personalized Course Analysis (PCA), consists of twenty goal statements. These statements, shown in Table 2, were designed to reflect the varieties of goals which students might see as important for their own purposes.

Our analysis of possible goals was based on reviews of statements such as those by WICHE (e.g. Lawrence, Weathersby, and Patterson, 1970; Micek, Service, and Lee, 1974), those contained in the Institutional Goals Inventory (1971), and similar documents, as well as our own, local emphases.

Two of the PCA goal areas, General Cognitive Development and Specific Content, correspond to scales covered in the CCQ. In addition, the PCA covers Job-related goals, Cultural emphases, Social/Political emphases, Personal Development, and Communication skills.

In the usual mode of administration for the PCA, a student makes two responses to each goal statement (each rating on a scale from 1-10). First, the student indicates how <u>important</u> the goal is for him; second, the student indicates how much <u>progress</u> he feels he has made. With the PCA a student may indicate that he made little progress in terms of developing job-related skills but that this kind of goal really had very little importance for him; or that he felt he made some progress in his personal development but, since this was the most important goal area for him, just "some" progress was a disappointing result.

Factor analysis of student responses to the goals strictly in terms of the "importance" ratings suggests that the Specific Content and Career/Job goals mainly define a single dimension and that Cultural Emphasis and Social/Political Emphasis may define one dimension. Personal Development seems to stand by itself and General Cognitive Development separates out nicely. It is not clear how the Communication items fit into the picture; the two items presently placed in this category do not have good communality even on a priori grounds. In any case, we intend to undertake more extensive factor analytic work with the PCA instrument before attempting to revise it.

After initial use of the PCA in its intended mode of administration, it quickly became apparent that delaying the inquiry regarding importance of goals till the end of the course was rather silly: this inquiry should be made at the beginning of the course. Therefore, a Personalized Pre-Course Analysis was developed which involves use of the PCA statements with students marking only the importance ratings. Results are typically returned to the instructor within the first two weeks of class.

Some of our most interesting results come from review of data from the Pre-Course Analysis. Four of these findings will be mentioned here. None of the results are particularly startling; they could probably be predicted in a rough fashion by many experienced faculty. The principal value of the PCA lies in documenting trends in a systematic way and in identifying exceptions to general trends.

First, we have noted considerable variation in the pattern of goal importance within curricular areas as well as across curricular areas. Figure 1 shows average class ratings for the seven areas covered in the PCA (used at the beginning of the semester) for three courses. The interesting point here is that all of these courses are in the same area (psychology). On the average, students in these three courses are looking for rather different things. Even larger differences can be noted when reviewing results from courses in different

curricular areas.

Second, the PCA reveals noteworthy differences in the goals of individual students within the same course. Figure 2 shows the goal patterns for four students taken from course "A" in Figure 1. Without even knowing what course "A" is all about, it is interesting to speculate how the instructor might differentiate content, assignments, etc. for these students, particularly for student #2. This kind of informal analysis immediately suggests the need for the more systematic kinds of analyses provided by clustering techniques. This is one of the areas in which we are attempting to make progress at the present time.

Thirdly, in a somewhat different vein, there is one goal area that seems to receive uniformly high ratings across nearly all students and courses. This is area #1: general cognitive development. Students in upper division and lower division courses, in humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, all seem to prize this area.

Finally, results of an entirely separate part of our evaluation work are beginning to converge with our efforts in the area of personalized course evaluation. We have recently undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the educational goals and previous experiences of our incoming freshmen. Factor analyses of these data have turned up almost exactly the same factors as those represented in the PCA (Hartley, 1976). To some extent this serves as evidence for the construct validity of the PCA. More importantly, it suggests the possibility of analyzing student goals and progress toward those goals both in terms of total educational experience and particular educational experiences in a conjoint fashion.

SOME ADVANTAGES - AND DISADVANTAGES

In the discussion of instruments and results above, some of the advantages and disadvantages of the CCQ and PCA types of instruments may have been hinted at. An explicit discussion of these advantages and disadvantages may

be helpful, especially to individuals who may be contemplating use of such instruments on their own campuses.

The major advantage of the types of instruments treated here, obviously, is that they focus attention on the student rather than on the instructor or instructional process. They serve as a constant reminder to both student and instructor that the central concern in the educational enterprise is the student and what happens to the student.

Additional advantages of learner-oriented course evaluations are outgrowths of the latter, general point of view. We find that these instruments apply to virtually any type of educational endeavor. With the more traditional types of questionnaires, requests are constantly received for separate instruments or at least some separate questions for team-taught courses, lab sections, discussion-based courses, field experiences, etc. The learner-oriented questionnaire, on the other hand, seems to apply about equally well to any kind of course or any kind of educational experience.

Another advantage of the learner-oriented end-of-course evaluation is that student responses may be aggregated across courses and related to institutional goals. Many institutions have goals in such areas as appreciation of the arts, development of social responsibility, preparation for careers, and so on. The extent to which students see themselves as progressing in these areas may be assessed by questionnaires given to seniors or graduates. But this is usually difficult to do, requiring as it does a major research undertaking. However, if learner-oriented course evaluations are used in many courses, it becomes possible to provide at least some information about self-perceived progress of students in such areas by simply summing data across courses. In contrast, relating averages on the traditional types of questionnaires to institutional goals is not very meaningful. For example, in terms of institutional goals, who really cares if most courses at a school are perceived as well-organized, or very difficult, or suffused with good student-instructor relationships?

A final advantage of learner-oriented instruments, especially of the PCA type, is that they allow an instructor to identify student concerns at the beginning of a course and plan instruction accordingly or, at least, proceed with the knowledge that there is some discrepancy between the instructor's goals and the students' goals for a course.

Of course, things are not all rosy. There are some disadvantages encountered in the use of learner-oriented course evaluations. Perhaps foremost among the difficulties is faculty attachment to the traditional kind of questionnaire. Many instructors seem to be more interested in whether students thought the course was well organized than whether the students thought they learned anything; or more interested in student reactions to quizzes than in whether the course met students' needs. This difficulty is compounded when a particular rating dimension does not have an underlying "good-bad" connotation. Individual instructors and faculty review committees have become accustomed to looking at certain types of information and interpreting it in certain ways. Substituting for the customary information a new type, oriented toward the learner rather than the instructor, is not accepted with universal enthusiasm. We have not yet developed a satisfactory solution for this problem.

Table 1. List of Factors and Items in Course Comments Questionnaire (CCQ)[a]

I. GLOBAL RATING

This scale or dimension appears to be the students' overall, summative judgment about the course. It is based on the following items:

2 - Did the instructor put the material across in an interesting way?
9 - Would you take another course from this instructor if you didn't have to?
16 - Considering everything, how would you rate the teaching in this course?
23 - Would you recommend this course to a friend who didn't have to take it?
30 - Considering everything, how would you rate this course?

II. RESPONSIVENESS

This scale deals with the relationship between the instructor and students. Another name for the scale might be "rapport." Previously, this scale was called "Interaction" but it was decided that "Responsiveness" more accurately described the dimension. This scale is based on the following items:

7 - Was the instructor actively helpful when students had difficulty?
14 - Did the instructor appear sensitive to the students' feelings?
21 - Was the instructor fair in his dealings with students?
28 - Were students free to ask questions, disagree, express their ideas, etc.?
35 - Did the instructor tell students when they had done particularly well?

III. DIFFICULTY

This scale deals with how hard, difficult, or demanding the course was. On this scale a course might be rated as too hard (high score) or too easy (low score). This scale is based on the following items:

4 - Did the instructor make the students develop intellectual discipline?
11 - Did students have to work hard to meet course requirements?
18 - Were students required to conform to high intellectual standards?
25 - Was the amount of work required appropriate for the credit received?
32 - Were the assigned readings and/or problems at an appropriate level?

IV. ORGANIZATION

This scale deals with matters of organization, preparation, and clarity of procedures as perceived by students. The scale is based on the following items:

6 - Did the instructor use enough examples to clarify the material?
13 - Did the instructor present material in a well organized fashion?
20 - Were the methods used for evaluating (tests, grading projects, etc.) reasonable?
27 - Were the objectives of the course clear?
34 - Were standards for grading clearly communicated to you?

Table 1. continued

V. GENERAL COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

This scale deals with development of cognitive abilities which are not tied directly to the content of the course. It is based on the following items:

1 - I developed my ability to identify main points or central issues.
8 - It is now easier for me to identify factors related to conclusions.
15 - I developed my ability to combine arguments and draw conclusions.
22 - I developed significant skills in the field.
29 - I developed my ability to function creatively.

VI. SPECIFIC COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

This scale deals with development in the cognitive area which is based rather directly on the specific course content. The scale is based on the following items:

3 - I can recognize when people are using faulty arguments in this field.
10 - In conversations, I can recall important information in this field.
17 - I can now understand relatively advanced presentations on the subject.
24 - I can identify values that enter into making judgments in this field.
31 - I became able to analyze new and complicated material in the field.

VII. RELEVANCE

This scale deals generally with the effect of the course on development of interest, concern, appreciation, etc. The scale is based on the following items:

5 - I developed increased interest in the field.
12 - I had discussions of related topics outside of class.
19 - I became aware of ways the subject is involved in my own life.
26 - I increased my concern for community projects related to the course.
33 - I appreciate things I didn't appreciate before.

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[a]From Hogan, T. P., UWGB Course Comments Questionnaire, Instructor's Manual. Office for Educational Development, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, 1973.

Table 2. Major Goal Areas and Specific Items in Personalized Course Analysis (PCA)

General Cognitive Development

Item	
1	Improve ability to think, reason critically
8	Learn to carefully analyze new materials, problems
15	Develop problem solving or creative ability

Career/Job Goals

Item	
2	Attain skills or knowledge for a career or job
9	Prepare for graduate or other advanced education
16	Increase my chances for getting a desirable job

Cultural Emphasis

Item	
3	Become aware of various cultures, ways of life
10	Increase appreciation of cultural expressions
17	Broaden outlook, develop new perspectives

Specific Content

Item	
4	Learn a particular body of knowledge
11	Explore a variety of topics in this field
18	Develop ability to apply skills in this field

Social/Political Emphasis

Item	
5	Increase sensitivity to social problems
12	Become involved in social and political concerns
19	Learn to work more effectively as a citizen

Personal Development

Item	
6	Clarify my own values, concerns, goals
13	Increase self-understanding
20	Increase self-reliance, personal maturity

Communication (Verbal, Interpersonal)

Item	
7	Improve communication skills, e.g. writing, speaking
14	Learn to work more effectively with other people

Figure 1. Illustrative differences among classes in terms of average importance of students' self-expressed goals

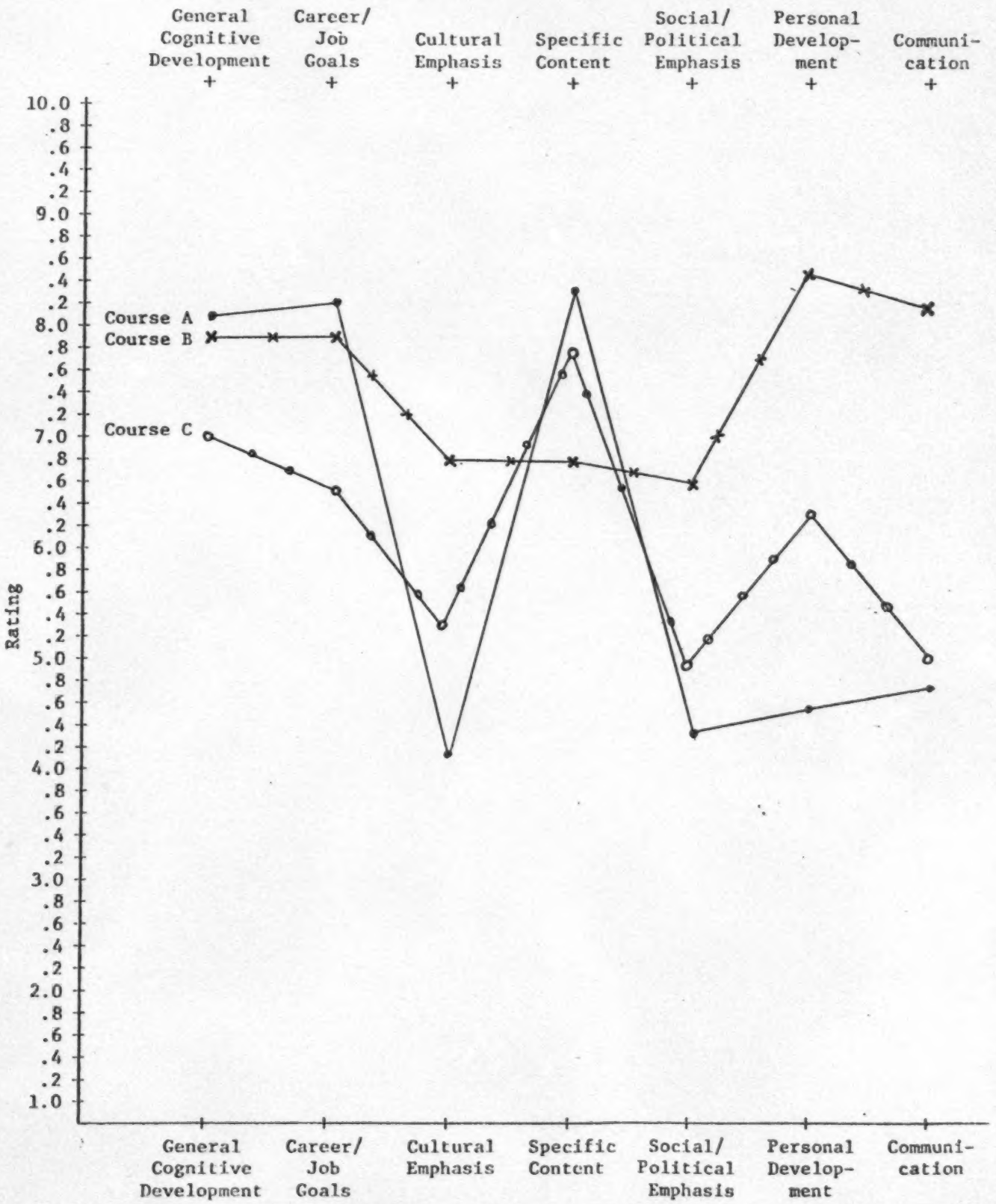
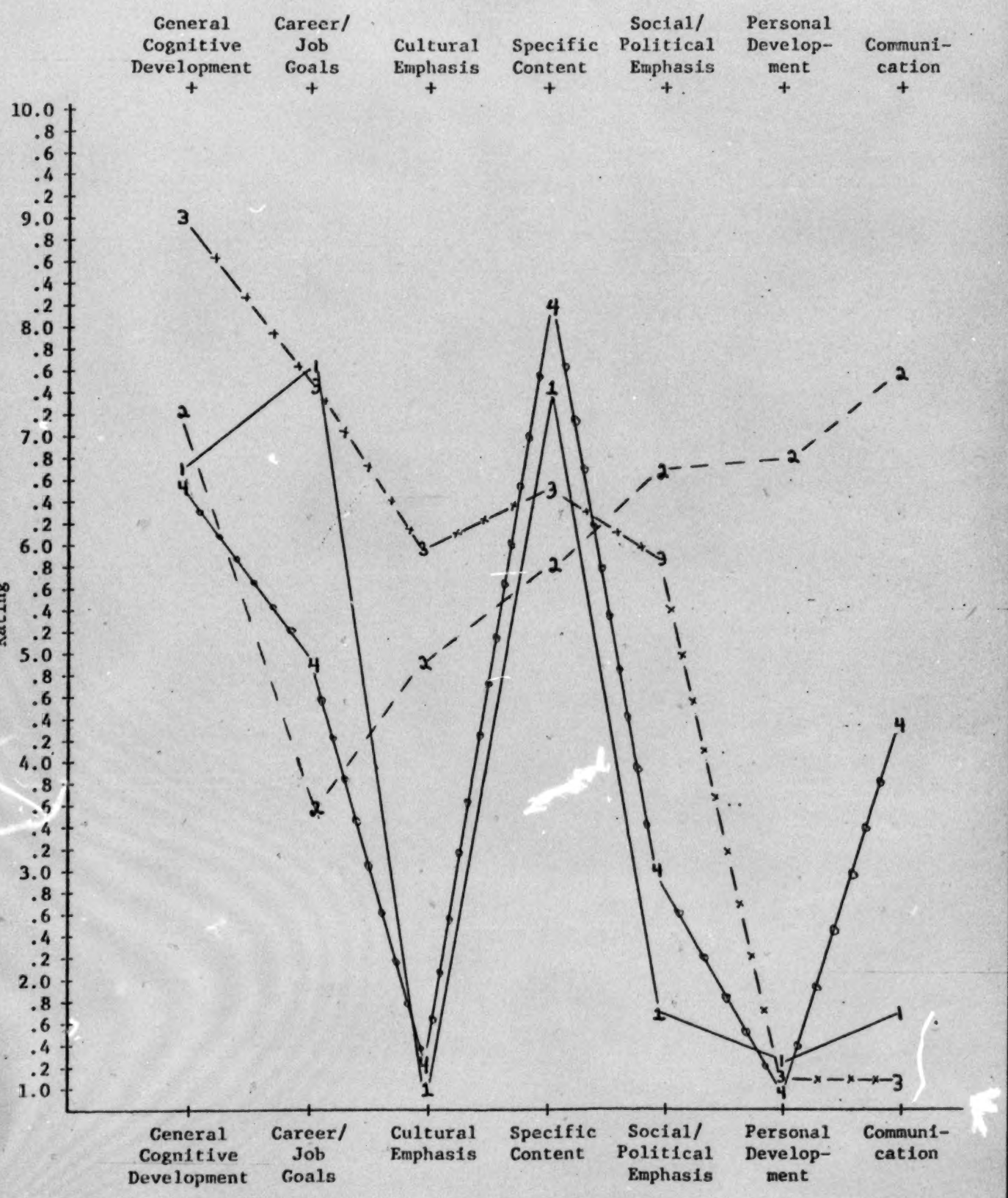


Figure 2. Illustrative differences among students (from Course A, Fig. 1) in terms of importance of goals



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